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SUBJECT: PRES. TANDJA'S ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN NAILS A
FORMER FRIEND; OTHER "BIG FISH."

REF: A. 06 NIAMEY 847

[1](#)B. 06 NIAMEY 1122

[1](#)1. In his remarks on Niger's Republic Day, December 18, 2006, President Tandja declared war on corruption in public life. He instructed the Minister of Justice to take action on over 60 cases that had developed since a public education funds scandal came to light last summer (reftels A,B). In the last two weeks, Nigeriens have seen actions to match his words and have applauded the jailing of several figures, including one who was regarded as a close friend of the President. Donors appear to be applauding too - the French led consortium that supports basic education resumed funding the program after the GON reimbursed part of the embezzled funds and continued its prosecution of the two ex-ministers and several subordinates.

[1](#)2. Three months after the Ministers of Basic Education and Health were thrown in jail for their alleged mis-appropriation of donor education funds, two more "big fish" have been snared in the GON's anti-corruption net. Jules Ougué, the Director General of the Nigerien City Planning and Housing Construction Corporation (SONUCI) was arrested and jailed on January 24 for the alleged embezzlement of 24 million CFA (\$47,337). Ougué, a former Higher Education Minister, Niamey Mayor and Governor, and political insider, was regarded as a close friend of President Tandja. His arrest brought cheers from the Nigerien street, private press, and opposition political parties, who regard this as a sign of how serious the President is about rooting out corruption. Illa Maikassoua, a former Minister of Higher Education in the Kountche regime, and Ambassador to Egypt from 1997-2000, was also jailed along with several former officials of the national television and radio station, who had allegedly embezzled 60 million CFA (\$118,343). Maikassoua's arrest - for allegedly engaging in illegal financial and real-estate transactions in the name of the Niger Embassy in Egypt - suggest that Tandja's war on corruption is not constrained by any statute of limitations.

[1](#)3. On December 28, the GON reimbursed the basic education donors' consortium to the tune of 520 million CFA (\$1,025,641), out of 4 billion misappropriated. This "first tranche" will be followed by others. Businessmen who bribed their way to lucrative, padded contracts, were forced to reimburse the GON. All of these actions have engendered a favorable reaction among donors and the public, and an equally strong sense that they must continue.

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